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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 003529

SIPDIS

AID/KATMANDU FOR REBECCA SCHEURER, WILLIAM S. BERGER
AID/BANGKOK FOR OFDA
AID/W FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA RTHAYER

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: OTRA NP TH BG

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE REQUEST FOR REBECCA K.
SCHEURER, OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR

REF. Sabita Shrestha's Email on July 21, 2005

¶1. Embassy Dhaka welcomes Office of Foreign Disaster and Assistance (OFDA) Regional Advisor Rebecca K. Scheurer to travel to Bangladesh on July 26 to 28, 2005 and grants country clearance, contingent repeat contingent on obtaining a Bangladeshi visa in her passport prior to arrival in Bangladesh (see Paragraph 3.D. and 3.E. below). The purpose of the visit is to hold OFDA/Mission Disaster and Relief Officer (MDRO) overview session at the Mission, and to meet with the officials from the Government of Bangladesh regarding disaster preparedness. Control Officer will be Golam Kabir. Contact information: Phone (Office) 88-02-885-5500 Ext. 2347, (Home) 88-02-8820620, (FAX) 88-02-989-0195, E-mail address: gkabir@usaid.gov. Ms. Rebecca K. Scheurer holds a SECRET security clearance and will be traveling on a Diplomatic Passport.

¶2. The Mission's workweek is Sunday-Thursday 0800 hours to 1630 hours. There will be no American and Bangladeshi holidays during the visit period.

¶3. Comments:

¶A. The traveler is advised to carry a copy of this cable with her for reference.

¶B. Hotel reservation has been made at the Hotel Paradise Garden, Baridhara, Dhaka, telephone number 8816126/7, fax number 9880202 which is within Embassy per diem.

¶C. Embassy expeditor and control officer will meet and assist the visitor at airport (arriving on 07/26/05 at 1535 hrs via Cosmic Airlines Flight # F5 401; departure scheduled on 07/28/05 at 1625 hrs via Cosmic Airlines Flight # F5 402 for Katmandu). Please advise if there is any change in flight information. Travelers making more than one connecting flight should consider rechecking their baggage, especially if transferring within the region. Embassy also advises carrying a change of clothes and all important documents in your carry-on bags.

¶D. IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE: Personnel entering Bangladesh are required to possess a valid passport, with a minimum validity of six months. A valid visa is required prior to arrival. There are no exceptions. Any traveler arriving without a valid visa will be returned to the United States or their country of origin upon the next available flight. Visas are no longer issued upon arrival. Please ensure that your visa is valid for at least six months after your scheduled departure date from Dhaka.

¶E. In special circumstances, Post will arrange for an airport visa upon arrival for persons originating travel to Bangladesh from countries where there is no Bangladesh visa-issuing mission. For an airport visa we require (1) a faxed photocopy of the traveler's passport bio-data page, sent to 880-2-882-4449 at least 7 calendar days in advance; and (2) a statement from the losing post that there is no Bangladesh mission in country XXX. The Embassy will not, repeat, not provide this service to persons originating travel in countries that have a Bangladesh visa-issuing mission. However, we urge all travelers to attempt to obtain a visa prior to traveling to Post.

¶4. Departure and onward travel: All departing personnel (including holders of diplomatic and official passports) are urged to use the services of the U.S. Mission's travel agent for reconfirming onward travel and to verify if the departure tax, approximately Taka 300 (approximately USD 5.17) and the travel tax (approximately Taka 2500) have been included in the cost of the ticket. If not included, each traveler

will be required to pay the taxes, in Taka only, at the airport.

15. Action Request: Fiscal Data. Each visitor, regardless of length of stay, must bring/forward fiscal data to pay for direct costs of the visit. Each agency, organization or visiting delegation will be charged for the actual costs attributed to its visit. Direct charge costs include, but are not limited to: American and LES overtime (for such services as airport expediting, cashier accommodation exchange, control room staffing, representational event support), travel and per diem costs incurred by post personnel in support of visitor's field travel, rental of vehicles and other equipment, long distance telephone calls, office supplies, gasoline and other vehicle maintenance costs, departure tax and other airport fees as appropriate. For TDYers remaining at post over 30 days, there is a charge for ICASS support services. This charge is for the following ICASS services: Basic Package, CLO and Health Services. Agencies will not be billed until the accumulated invoice cost for TDY support exceeds \$2,500 for the fiscal year. If your sponsoring agency is not signed up for ICASS services at post, please be prepared to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for ICASS support services upon arrival. The agency should provide post with a written communication, generated by the traveler's headquarters, that confirms the agency will pay ICASS charges for the TDYer, provides the agency ICASS billing code the TDY support charges should be applied to, and authorizes the traveler to sign the ICASS invoice generated by the TDY module. Where travel is urgent, the TDYer should bring this documentation with him/her to ensure there are no interruptions in the provision of service. Post will not provide any service to a TDYer staying in excess of thirty days without provision of this documentation before day 31 of the TDY.

16. Currency: The local use of U.S. Dollars (USD) is prohibited by law, except for the payment of a hotel bill. The local currency, the Taka, must be used for all other local transactions. Accommodation exchange is available at the Chancery through the Citi Bank cashier. The exchange rate fluctuates and is currently approximately Taka 64 to USD 1.00. Reverse accommodation exchange is available only at the original place of exchange with original documents and receipts as proof. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are limited and dispense Taka only. Travelers checks cannot be used in most establishments except international hotels. However, the Citi Bank at the Chancery will cash traveler checks for Taka only. Most major credit cards are accepted at international hotels.

17. Club and Commissary:

1A. The American Recreation Association (known as ARA or "The Club") facility is available to U.S. citizen official visitors for a temporary membership fee of USD 10.00 per week. This can not be pro-rated for a shorter visit. In addition to the membership fee, you will be required to purchase a cash card, USD 10.00 per card or Taka 600.00. A copy of your passport data page or a passport-sized photograph is necessary to obtain a cash card. This card will enable you to have meals and use club facilities (which include tennis court, squash court, swimming pool, exercise room, and restaurant/bar.)

1B. The U.S. Commissary facility is available to U.S. citizen official visitors who are USG employees. However, payment is permitted only by USD personal check or traveler checks. Cash dollars and local currency payments cannot be accepted. Change will not be provided for transactions using traveler checks. Therefore, smaller denomination traveler checks would be more useful.

18. NOTE: Health - Post cannot emphasize strongly enough that all travelers must have health insurance that will cover medical evacuations by air ambulance. Travelers should carry with them the 24/7 contact information for their insurer. Medical care in Bangladesh is very basic and Post does not recommend that anyone remain hospitalized here.

Intestinal problems are common in Dhaka. Visitors must exercise care in what they eat and drink; food-borne diseases are common. Presume that all tap water is contaminated, even in hotels. Travelers are advised to drink bottled/boiled water and eat only fruits and vegetables that have been cooked and peeled. Undercooked meat should be avoided. Travelers should

also avoid eating uncooked dairy products and food sold on the streets. Visitors who take medication on a regular basis should bring enough for the duration of their visit. It is not always possible to find equivalents for American prescriptions on the local market. In general, local medical facilities are substandard. The U.S. Mission has a Medical Unit staffed by a U.S. Physician and registered nurses. Travelers venturing outside Dhaka are advised to use standard anti-malaria prophylaxis, including taking appropriate anti-malarial medication, using mosquito protection and the use of bed netting. It is strongly recommended that all visitors bring a supply of mosquito repellent to Dhaka. There have been cases of mosquito-borne illnesses, including malaria and dengue fever, which is transmitted by a day-biting mosquito. The only effective repellent we are aware of contains DEET (20% DEET is the maximum that is considered safe for children). Supplies are usually available in the commissary; however it is a good idea to have your own supply should you arrive in Dhaka when the commissary is not open. We also recommend that travelers have updated immunizations, especially an up-to-date typhoid immunization (either oral or injectable.)

¶9. Security: Bangladesh continues to experience some anti-American sentiment as the result of U.S. military and other actions in the war against terrorism, and events in the Middle East. Anti-American demonstrations throughout Bangladesh, which generally occur on Friday afternoons, have the potential to take place any time and to be unruly. In addition, the longstanding confrontation between the two leading political parties has prompted general strikes (hartals), public demonstrations and marches. They can be called on very short notice and can turn violent. Normal vehicular traffic is discouraged during hartals. Visitors should strictly avoid all political protests, demonstrations and marches. They should consider possible security risks in deciding whether to attend other gatherings.

¶10. Post policy authorizes travelers visiting post to hand carry an unclassified laptop into the Controlled Access Area providing that the laptop is transported under the immediate personal control of the traveler, or is transported via diplomatic pouch, with prior approval of the RSO. All travelers must also maintain continuous, immediate custody of a laptop while in the CAA. Further instructions will be given during the security brief upon arrival.

¶11. The Embassy advises Americans to be aware of their surroundings at all times, to avoid predictable behavior, and not to accept packages from unknown individuals. Sensitive or personal matters should not be discussed over local telephone lines.

¶12. The State Department has classified the crime threat in Dhaka as high. Foreigners are not generally the target of violent crime. However, pick-pocketing, purse-snatching and other forms of street crime occur frequently, especially in areas frequented by foreigners. Visitors should avoid walking alone after dark, carrying large sums of money, or wearing expensive jewelry. Valuables should be stored in the hotel safety deposit box and should not be left unattended in hotel rooms. Visitors should use the Embassy Motor Pool as the Chief of Mission has declared public transportation to be unsafe. The Regional Security Officer strongly discourages the use of rickshaws, baby taxis, and other public transport. In addition, you should keep the Embassy's 24-hour emergency telephone number available at all times (880-02-885-5500); receptionists are on duty 24 hours a day.

¶13. Agency specific general information: None.

¶14. We look forward to your visit.

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